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Committee on Environmental Policy

Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment

Twenty-fifth session

Geneva, 2 and 3 May 2023

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Implementing the mandate and terms of reference

Draft annual timetable of activities for 2024

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Committee on Environmental Policy, at its special session (Nicosia, 3–4 October 2022)¹, and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Executive Committee, at its hundred and twenty-sixth session (Geneva, 13 January 2023,) approved the extension of the mandate and terms of reference (2017–2021) of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment until the end of 2023 to allow the Working Group to present a new draft mandate and terms of reference to the Committee at its twenty-eighth session (Geneva, 1–3 November 2023). The terms of reference require the preparation of annual timetables of activities, taking into account the financial and human resources available.²

The present document provides a draft annual timetable of activities for 2024 for consideration by the Working Group at its twenty-fifth session and is based on the new mandate and terms of reference. The annual timetable of activities for 2024 will be submitted to the Committee on Environmental Policy for consideration at its twenty-eighth session.

¹ ECE/CEP/S/2022/6, para. 31 (a), available at
<https://unece.org/environmental/documents/2023/01/reports/report-committee-environmental-policy-its-special-session>.

² ECE/CEP/2017/2, para. 32 (b), and annex II, para. 5.



Introduction

1. The present document sets out a timetable of activities (see table below) to be carried out by the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment in 2024. It also describes activities that are relevant for the Working Group over a five-year period.
2. The timetable is based on the proposed new mandate and terms of reference of the Working Group (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2023/3).
3. The Working Group will implement the activities in close collaboration with national and international governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, including youth organizations, research institutes and academia, and with other relevant United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) bodies, such as the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators and international and regional organizations.
4. With the assistance of the ECE secretariat, member States and organizations that agree to lead any of the activities outlined below will facilitate their implementation and report to the Working Group on the progress made and challenges faced.
5. The Working Group will support the secretariat in its continuing efforts to mobilize resources and assistance from member States and regional and international organizations to enable the Working Group to operate fully.

<i>Main overall objective and activity</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Task or event</i>	<i>Tentative timing in 2024 (Other relevant time period)</i>	<i>Indicator of achievement</i>
(a) Programme area 1. Support the development of environmental monitoring and information systems in support of regular environmental assessment and reporting, and their alignment with open data and the SEIS principles and pillars, and in particular:				
(i) Support institutional strengthening and legislative improvement	Medium	Provide recommendations on institutional strengthening and legislative improvement through showcasing good practice examples during annual Working Group sessions	Second quarter of 2024 (2025–2028)	Recommendations provided during annual session of Working Group
(ii) Promote use of new technologies and tools (e.g., big data, the Internet of Things and artificial intelligence) and integration of official statistics and administrative data with both environmental data from new sources, including from Earth observation and geospatial data, and data for other sectors, including health and transport	High	Promote use of new technologies and integration of environmental data and statistics through showcasing good practice examples during annual Working Group sessions	Second quarter of 2024 and throughout 2024 (2025–2028)	Annual session of Working Group held and new technologies promoted Number of good practice examples provided
		Develop guidance on use of Earth observation data and geospatial information in national environmental monitoring and assessment systems ^a	Throughout 2024 (2025)	Guidance drafted ^a
(iii) Regularly evaluate performance of environmental monitoring and information systems in line with principles and pillars of open data and SEIS and provide recommendations on how environmental monitoring and information systems can be further strengthened	High	Compile completed questionnaires on progress in environmental monitoring at national level, production of selected revised indicators and status of SEIS, and provide recommendations and include an item on this topic in agenda of annual sessions of Working Group	Second quarter of 2024 and throughout 2024 (2025–2028)	Completed questionnaires Progress report by member States and annual session of Working Group held, and progress presented and discussed
		Prepare progress report(s) for Committee on Environmental Policy on implementation of national information systems in line with open data and principles and pillars of SEIS	Second half of 2024 (2025–2028)	Progress report prepared for and welcomed by Committee members
(iv) Contribute to process of implementing main environmental monitoring- and assessment-related outcomes of Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference in 2024–2027 including	High	Bring policy and science together to develop and implement appropriate and standardized pan-European methods and systems for monitoring and information management at annual sessions of	Second quarter of 2024 (2025–2028)	Annual session of Working Group held,

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those related to a green and circular economy and sustainable infrastructure and tourism		Working Group or other mechanism to implement relevant outcomes		providing platform for knowledge exchange Reports of Working Group and Committee on Environmental Policy
		Promote use of ECE Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators	Throughout 2024 (2025–2028)	ECE Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators promoted at annual session of Working Group, thematic workshops and capacity development activities Use of indicators in national reports and assessments
		Promote use of appropriate and standardized methods for monitoring pollution, including for air emissions, and information systems for public availability of monitoring data in the region by showcasing good practices and training ^a	Second quarter of 2024 (2025–2028)	Annual session of Working Group held Capacity development activities held ^a
		Support development of common definitions, for example, of the term “sustainable infrastructure”, to allow quantifying of progress ^a	Throughout 2024 (2025–2026)	Options to develop common definitions explored (e.g., by suggesting and supporting establishment of task forces, consultancies, etc.) and support provided ^a

<i>Main overall objective and activity</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Task or event</i>	<i>Tentative timing in 2024 (Other relevant time period)</i>	<i>Indicator of achievement</i>
		Support revision of ECE Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators (e.g., by suggesting updates or new indicators including on sustainable tourism or other emerging themes) and support production thereof	Throughout 2024 (2025–2028)	Input on policy needs etc. provided to review process
		Assist countries to fully implement principles and pillars of SEIS and full production and sharing of all data flows associated with ECE environmental indicators and employ, as appropriate, updated Recommendations on the more effective use of electronic information tools developed under the auspices of the Aarhus Convention (see also programme area 1, activity (iii)) ^a	Throughout 2024 (2025–2028)	Capacity development activities held and advisory services provided ^a
		Enhance synergies and interoperability between national and international systems in order to streamline environmental monitoring and reporting, reduce reporting requirements for countries and improve readability and efficiency, from indicator methodologies to data flow reporting (see programme area 2)	Second quarter of 2024 2024–2028	Progress described in reports of annual sessions of Working Group
		Support continued digitization of environmental monitoring systems and use of new technologies for enhanced high-quality data production (see programme area 1), for example, through showcasing good practices ^a	2024–2028	Advisory services provided ^a
(v) Contribute to closure of monitoring gaps (e.g., as identified in seventh pan-European environmental assessment) in Europe and Central Asia, including in areas of biodiversity and ecosystems; air and climate change; fresh water; chemicals and waste; land and soil; coastal waters, marine ecosystems and seas, as well as monitoring of sustainable infrastructure, monitoring circular economy and sustainable tourism, monitoring of	High	Share good practices and provide capacity development to contribute to closure of monitoring gaps, promote and support development of bankable projects and project proposals and bring policy, science and other relevant stakeholders together to support closure of monitoring gaps (see also programme area 1 (iv)) ^a	Second quarter of 2024 (2025–2028)	Annual session of Working Group held Capacity development activities held, experience exchanged and proposal development supported ^a

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environmental financing; and environmental reporting; and support development and use of standardized methods and guidance on environmental monitoring		Review and update guidelines on environmental monitoring and reporting and promote use of developed guidance	Throughout 2024 (2025–2028)	Updated guidelines published
(b) Programme area 2. Support the development of regular pan-European environmental assessments and regular state-of-the-environment reporting, to assist the transition to sustainable development and a green and circular economy and in particular:				
(i) Bring together experts from partner organizations and other interested parties to discuss and oversee eighth pan-European environmental assessment			To be implemented from 2025 onwards	
(ii) Discuss and support state-of-the-environment reporting and detail regional priorities concerning streamlining of regular state-of-the-environment reporting, also involving other thematic networks, including those under multilateral environmental agreements, in the discussion	High	Include relevant agenda item in annual sessions of Working Group Promote and support development of regular state-of-the-environment reports ^a	Second quarter of 2024 and throughout 2024 (2025–2028)	Annual session of Working Group held Progress in 2–3 state-of-the-environment reports in the region ^a Regional priorities described in report on Working Group session
(iii) Oversee implementation of proposed recommendations and guidance provided by seventh pan-European environmental assessment and streamlining of regular state-of-the-environment reporting	High	Include relevant agenda item in annual sessions of Working Group Support implementation of recommendations, including through providing guidance and advisory services ^a (see also programme area 1 (iv)–(v))	Second quarter of 2024 (2025–2028)	Annual session of Working Group held Progress in implementation of recommendations reflected in report of Working Group session ^a
(iv) Oversee assessment, where possible, of overall achievement of commitments made in last 3–5 pan-European declarations			To be implemented from 2025 onwards	

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<p>(c) Programme area 3. Continue process of consultation between ECE member States, partner organizations and other institutions and networks, including secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements, international financial institutions and private sector, with relevant expertise in the area. Provide inclusive platform for countries to discuss recent developments in the area of monitoring and assessment and integration of environmental, economic and social information and data with regard to implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting, a green and circular economy and other related areas of work. In addition:</p>				
<p>(i) Cooperate with Joint Task Force and other relevant bodies under other ECE sectoral subprogrammes, including those on Housing and Land Management, Population, Sustainable Energy and Transport, to ensure that activities are synergetic and streamlined</p>	Medium	Include relevant agenda item in annual sessions of Working Group and Joint Task Force	Second and fourth quarters of 2024 (2025–2028)	Progress on streamlining of activities, including on environmental statistics and indicators described in report of Working Group session
<p>(ii) Engage with other communities and networks to discuss how environmental, social and economic information and data can be integrated and utilized in decision-making and how best to use new technologies and geospatial information</p>	Medium	Include relevant agenda item in annual sessions of Working Group	Second quarter of 2024 (2025–2028)	Progress on data integration and use thereof in reports and assessments described in report of Working Group session Participation by other communities and networks described in report of Working Group session
<p>(iii) Publish outcomes from Working Group’s collaborative activities (e.g., good practices, guidelines and lessons learned) to share outputs and guide future activities in the area</p>	Medium	Publish other guidelines, as appropriate ^a	2024 (2025–2028)	Guidelines issued ^a
<p>(d) Programme area 4. Engage in capacity development assistance addressing specific challenges at regional, subregional and national levels related to environmental monitoring and assessment and environmental knowledge. The specific challenges to be addressed will depend on regional and national capacity gaps and be defined by the Working Group members. The implementation of capacity development activities will depend on the mobilization of resources. Such activities might include:</p>				

<i>Main overall objective and activity</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Task or event</i>	<i>Tentative timing in 2024 (Other relevant time period)</i>	<i>Indicator of achievement</i>
(i) Detailing regional and national capacity gaps in environmental monitoring, information and reporting and data needed for producing environmental indicators. This will involve identifying institutional, legal, monitoring, data and information gaps in target countries			To be implemented from 2026 onwards ^a	
(ii) Supporting countries, in collaboration with Joint Task Force, in development, implementation and use of regional and national indicator frameworks to monitor relevant environmental policy developments and activities to support their implementation, including review and establishment of national reporting mechanisms, procedures and methodological approaches associated with the indicators in all ECE countries	High	Support to application of revised ECE Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators and other indicator frameworks by member States through training	2024 (2025–2028)	Training on revised ECE Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators delivered
(iii) Engaging and liaising directly with other relevant knowledge-sharing actors working on capacity development in related areas of work	High	Include relevant agenda item in annual sessions of Working Group Organize joint capacity development workshops and activities ^a ECE secretariat engage with other actors, for example, EEA, ESA, ITU, OECD, UNEP or WHO	Second quarter of 2024 (2024–2028)	Annual session of Working Group held Holding of capacity development workshops or sessions ^a Participation and engagement by other communities and networks described in report on Working Group session and workshops Joint capacity development activities held ^a
(iv) Implementing capacity development activities to provide assistance in accordance with priority	Medium	Include relevant agenda item in annual sessions of Working Group, including capacity development	Second quarter of 2024 (2025–2028)	Annual session of Working Group held

<i>Main overall objective and activity</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Task or event</i>	<i>Tentative timing in 2024 (Other relevant time period)</i>	<i>Indicator of achievement</i>
areas of action identified for targeted ECE countries at regional, subregional or national level		Capacity development activities on environmental monitoring, including on new technologies, assessment and reporting ^a	Throughout 2024 (2025–2028)	Description of capacity development activities in report on session Number of capacity development activities held ^a
		Maintain and enhance regional knowledge-sharing platform ^a	Throughout 2024 (2025–2028)	Regional knowledge-sharing platform up to date ^a
(e) Cross-cutting activities	High	Include relevant agenda item in annual session of Working Group, including capacity development	Second quarter of 2024 (2025–2028)	Annual session of Working Group held Report on session and capacity development described
	High	Draft annual timetable of activities	Second quarter of 2024 (2025–2028)	Annual timetable approved by Working Group
	Medium	Mainstream gender into activities of Working Group, for example, in dedicated capacity development events or sessions, election of chairs, participation in events, and strengthen collection and use of disaggregated data	2024 (2025–2028)	Report of annual sessions of Working Group and/or outcomes of capacity development activities
	High	Mobilize resources to ensure that Working Group can implement all needed tasks to effectively support transition to a green and circular economy and implementation of 2030 Agenda	2024 (2025–2028)	Additional resources mobilized (amount and number of contributions)
	High	Present outcomes and relevant documents of Working Group (annual timetables, ToR, progress reports, etc.) at sessions of Committee on Environmental Policy	Fourth quarter of 2024 (2025–2028)	Mandate and ToR of Working Group for 2029–2033 approved by Committee

^a Activities and their achievement that are subject to the availability of additional resources. Abbreviations: EEA, European Environment Agency; ESA, European Space Agency; ITU, International Telecommunication Union; OECD, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; SEIS, Shared Environmental Information System; ToR, terms of reference; UNEP, United Nations Environment Programme; WHO, World Health Organization.
